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# **ORIGIN OF 4-H LIFE**

WYSONG PUBLISHING COMPANY

*Herein, I attempt a brief, and my own version of the origin of 4-H LIFE, a magazine that grew from an idea of a 4-H Club member.*

*"Henry D. Kimmel"*

**A** FEW years ago while some of the present 4-H club members and leaders were still in the cradle, and others were just old enough to help dad and mother with the work about the house and the farm, a 4-H club member in Montgomery County, Ohio, was working his way thru college. Majoring in subjects that would help build a foundation for his life's work—publishing a good magazine entirely devoted to the 4-H club members and leaders. A magazine covering their problems in 4-H club work, and leisure time, whether it be in the club meetings, 4-H club camps, 4-H club tours and travels, county or state fairs, or the individual project work at home.

During his junior year in high school, he was a delegate to state 4-H Club Congress. For a whole week, mixing with the delegates, he heard from a large majority of these 4-H members reports and discussions on their prize calf or pig, their big corn crop or the large potato yield. Many of the girls had snapshots of dresses and complete costume outfits that won honors at the county and state fair. Others showed pictures of 4-H club meetings in session; snapshots of 4-H groups in camp (4-H county camp), at parties, folk dances, and many other different types of pictures and stories of 4-H members and projects that planted an "idea" in his head. The "idea" was that an OVERALL report like this IN PRINT every month would definitely make a "big hit" with every 4-H club member and leader that would have an opportunity to read it.

Thinking it over for a day, the "idea" still seemed to him very good and practical. The

State 4-H Club Leader, Mr. W. H. Palmer, after listening to the story, concluded that it would be a worthy project. It was during that week at the state 4-H Club Congress at Ohio State University in 1926, that Virgil Wysong actually conceived the "idea" of developing a good publication to be entirely devoted to 4-H Club members and leaders.

His first 4-H club paper made its appearance in the spring of 1930. Started with a circulation of 50 copies per month, and within a year climbed to 500 copies. The first venture proved successful. It covered the activities of a few clubs in the county. By 1935, to meet the increasing demand for a larger coverage and to satisfy state wide requests for a "state" 4-H publication, meant special designing in makeup and a different editorial policy. It also meant carrying advertising space at a higher rate than local business could support. The problem was presented to an advertising agency in Cleveland, Ohio. The agency executives were very much impressed with the program. Realizing the immediate need for such a magazine, especially on a National basis; they outlined a suggestive program that would include National advertising, gave it to Virgil, and arranged for him to go to Chicago and start plans for a National 4-H Club magazine. Once more the thrill of achievement was felt, the possibility of a national 4-H publication—his idea and inspiration—to bind more closely together thru a national 4-H publication, the relationship of 4-H club members and leaders all over the United States.

It wasn't an easy job to plan a magazine, especially on a national coverage. To plan production on a magazine of this type meant

many things had to be done. First, an editorial policy had to be outlined, then find the best suited editors, writers, photographers, artists, and other professional help that would fit into the picture to produce a new magazine of high character and keen reader interest. The second big job was the physical makeup. Should it be a newspaper style? Would a large size magazine like Saturday Evening Post answer the need? The paper stock had to be seriously considered. Most of the farm papers and magazines were not always printed on the best or higher grade of paper. Should the editorial pages of the magazine be all reading material, or 50% pictures, or a larger percentage of pictures? A survey was made, first to 4-H club members as to the type of publication they would like to read. These results were checked with parents, and 4-H leaders—then with editors and publishers of newspapers and magazines who had an interest in the rural field. The results of the survey is embodied in 4-H Life, truly a magazine by and for 4-H folks.

With the same determination, that every club member has to receive a "A" rating in achievements, "4-H Life", just like the club project, required time and money for development. To this develop this publication took money, more money than Virgil had available. Some bankers and financiers were very anxious to help, however with an idea in form of a company house organ that included 4-H material, and would make a very good advertising and promotional piece. Large corporations offered attractive propositions if 4-H Life could be published under limitations, and in most cases would have been contrary to the 4-H club program.

This is exactly what Virgil didn't want. To him it would have been the same as a club member discarding that little pig and replacing it with a well fed porker from a professional live stock breeder, in order to be sure of a blue ribbon at the show. These attractive offers only stimulated his determination and fired his enthusiasm to meet the challenge of achievement.

Mr. R. H. Peters, a Dayton banker and real-estate broker, was the first to give time and money without personal gain, to help promote the development of 4-H Life. Soon others, with the same idea, fell in line to help with the project. C. C. Vaniman, Ford dealer at Trotwood, Ohio, made extensive contributions to the program of 4-H Life in its early stages. Floyd F. Koogler, Dayton attorney, public spirited and active in many community affairs, joined the ranks with the other business men and became legal adviser for 4-H Life. Editors, writers, artists, and other professional people of national fame interested and active in the publication field joined in line with the local business men to help, because they also were extremely interested in the Youth of America, and always contribute to that cause when ever possible.

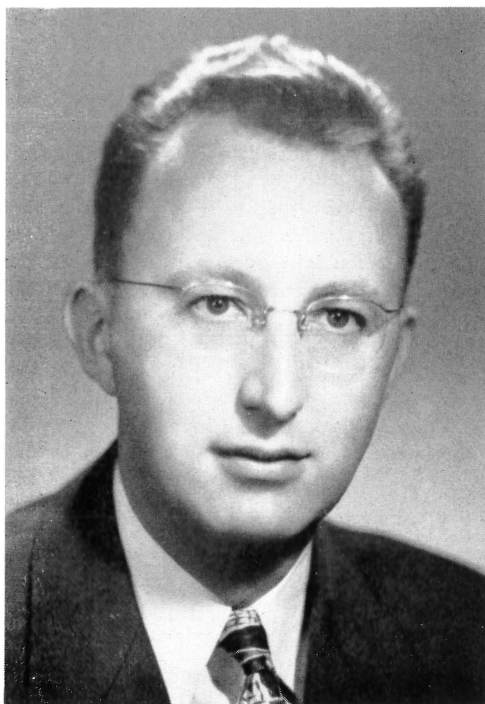
Checking and double checking with many state and county 4-H club leaders thru interviews, the editorial and physical makeup of 4-H Life was completed. It met with approval by all who saw it. By the summer of 1936 many of the leading newspapers and trade magazines had given 4-H Life much publicity. Printers became interested; advertising executives of large manufacturers, companies, and advertising agencies made inquiries. Nearly all of the men that made the contacts or inquiries, after studying the

program, became interested to the point of taking a personal part in it, and offered to cooperate in any way possible to help with the development of the magazine. The newspapers that carried the story to the homes of the 4-H members, created an immediate desire for the publications. The office was soon swamped with requests from every state in the United States, and Possessions, for 4-H Life. Word was sent out that it would be necessary to wait a little longer, because there was much work to be done. Then, just as 4-H Life was about to go to press, the War came on. Naturally, the whole 4-H Life program was put on the shelf to do a bigger job.

The excitement of V-J Day hadn't died down before Virgil started reviving 4-H Life. It meant reassembling the now faded material that was packed away during the war. Reorganization was no small job. It meant renewing old contacts, opening another office, and contacting more people with the proper background and experience to produce the publication.

By late fall of 1946, 4-H Life was off to a new start. To be edited by 4-H people for 4-H club members and leaders. Starting with an "idea" in 1926, Virgil has made, since that time, an extensive study of the 4-H club field. He has devoted full time since 1935 (not including the war years) to research and surveys; acquiring material and personnel necessary to plan, edit and publish each month a magazine entirely unlike any other magazine published. Devoted exclusively to the latest 4-H developments, happenings, matters of high interest to the 4-H members, their parents, and friends.

Henry D. Kimmel



**VIRGIL WYSONG**  
President

Was the first 4-H club member in the Johnsville-New Lebanon school district, during his high school period was associated with the local, county and state 4-H activities. Helped to organize and was a member of the board of Ohio's first State Junior Fair in 1929. He also was active in Boy Scout and Hi-Y work. Attended college at Ohio State University and Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, N. Y.



**ELWOOD L. RANDALL**  
Vice President

Initiated into business during his high school period in his father's automobile business. Later, for six years, was associated with his father operating one of Dayton's largest (New Car) automobile business. He was purchasing agent for The MacGregor Co. in Dayton for four years. Several years a buyer at Frigidaire, and during the war a buyer at Waco Aircraft, Troy, Ohio.



**HENRY D. KIMMEL**  
Circulation Manager

A former 4-H club member and leader. Born and raised on a farm. For six years operated his father's farm. Ten years in retail merchandising and sales promotion. Three years in armed forces, World War II. Veteran of five European Campaigns. Eleven months of action with Patton's 6th Armored Division in Normandy, France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany.



**VERDON KREITZER**  
Treasurer

One of the many former 4-H club members that had a keen interest in music and art. As a hobby the interest was continued and today is one of Dayton's outstanding organist. He plays in many of the leading churches for special programs. Takes an active part in community and church affairs. For the past 13 years associated with the Winters National Bank, Dayton, O.

Just a note-

When life's last shadow falls  
We shall go as little children  
To the Father of us all

Now as a child I lay me down to sleep  
I pray the Lord my soul to take  
Guide my Fred, Ed, Philip and daddy  
Thru life's joys, tears and pain  
and in every struggle that they'll meet.

Keep them strong, safe and sweet  
some day we'll again walk together  
in Heaven on those Golden Streets.

--Mother

John - found this note some after  
you left - I've made a  
copy and sending it to you.  
She has thought and blamed  
for the boys and I far more  
than we can realize.  
- Ouey